

UNUSED GIFT CARDS

In Connecticut, gift cards are becoming a major way of doing business. Most consumers were probably unaware that Connecticut could legally seize the value of unclaimed gift cards and certificates after three years. With the passage of the "Gift Card" act the state no longer can keep unclaimed gift cards. This is a victory for all consumers.



Currently, the law considers most types of property abandoned if the owner fails to claim it after three years. This act (1) exempts the value of gift cards from the law; (2) eliminates the current law that explicitly states that the value of an unredeemed gift card is presumed abandoned three years after the purchase date or its last use, whichever is later; and (3) eliminates the requirement that gift card sellers obtain and keep the purchaser's address.

It also forgives holders of abandoned property from liability to the state for interest or penalty if they failed to report or deliver abandoned gift certificates to the state treasurer before August 16, 2003. (Public Act 05-189)

PATIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND DISCOUNT CARDS FOR PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES

With a unanimous vote, the House passed Public Act 05-269, establishing the Pharmacy Outreach Program to provide greater access to and education about reduced and free prescription drug programs available to Connecticut residents. Administered by the pharmaceutical manufacturers, the program creates a statewide 800 number and website to readily provide information on voluntary drug assistance programs and advise residents on their eligibility for various programs. Instead of visiting several websites or calling drug companies to sign up for their reduced or no cost drug programs, the Pharmacy Outreach Program will provide one-stop shopping for all available voluntary drug assistance programs, eliminating obstacles and cumbersome processes for our neediest residents.



PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH

State Representative Kevin Ryan
Legislative Office Building, Room 3804
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

1-800-842-8267

E-mail: kevin.ryan@cga.ct.gov

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD, CT
Permit No. 3937



State Representative
Kevin Ryan

139th District - serving
Bozrah - Franklin - Lebanon - Montville

**LEGISLATIVE
UPDATE**

LIMITING CELL PHONE DIRECTORIES

Within the past decade cell phones have become a staple of American life. Their cost and convenience have revolutionized the way we communicate. Instead of paying for an unlimited calling plan, most families opt for a plan that includes a certain number of minutes and anything over the limit is priced at a premium. Therefore many do not disclose their cell phone number for fear they will incur high overage costs.



When the communications industry began making plans to release comprehensive directories disclosing the names, numbers, and addresses of their customers, something had to be done. I'm proud that Connecticut is one of the first states in the country to adopt legislation that protects customers from arbitrarily being listed in cell phone directories.

This bill bars companies from disclosing customer information unless expressly authorized by the customer. There is no penalty for declining authorization or rescinding authorization, previously given, by the customer at any time. The bill also requires the Department of Public Utility Control, a state agency, to establish a toll-free number and website by October 1, 2005, to review consumer cell phone complaints and inquiries. (Public Act 05-241)

ACCURATE POSTING OF GAS PRICES

Legislation passed this year by the General Assembly requires customer clubs or organizations that sell gasoline to the general public to post prices in the same manner for members and non-members. In an effort to draw customers, some club retailers prominently display discounted prices available only to members. Given the recent spike in gas prices, the bill seeks to ensure that consumers have accurate information needed to make informed choices. The new law is effective immediately. (Public Act 05-



RESTRICTING THE SALE OF COSMETIC CONTACT LENSES

As the sales of cosmetic contact lenses that are not used to improve vision has increased, eye physicians have become increasingly concerned with the long term care of the patient. Contacts need to be fitted to each individual and properly cared for. Consumers who purchase cosmetic contacts through non-optical establishment retailers do not receive a proper fitting, if any, and would not be trained to appropriately take care of the contacts. The long-term effects can lead to impaired vision and damage to the eye. By restricting the sale to only those retailers properly trained in fitting and training patients, the future safety of the patient can be ensured. (Public Act 05-119)



PROMOTION OF COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH APPLICATIONS WITH INDUSTRY

In a fast-evolving technology marketplace, the General Assembly makes a strong statement that Connecticut will be a source for research and development excellence in emerging technologies. Public Act 198 will foster greater cooperation and collaboration between industry, universities and colleges specifically in the emerging technology, stem cell research and nanotechnology sectors. With the goals of talent generation, improved product development and new jobs, the bill establishes four new grant programs by the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), within available appropriations.

The OWC programs will help prepare college students for careers in research and development, spur research collaboration between industry and universities, promote technology transfer and advance nanotechnology in Connecticut. Grants will be available to students, faculty, institutions of higher education, and businesses for student outreach, the upgrade of instructional labs, recruitment of top professors in basic and applied research, commercialization of university research, and career development in industry shortage areas.

CONSUMER PROTECTIONS UNDER RETAIL RETURN POLICIES

A new law ensures consumers' rights when returning or exchanging retail merchandise. Stores must now warn consumers of electronic databases tracking their refunds and clearly state policies limiting or prohibiting exchanges. Retail establishments cannot refuse a return for a refund or credit if the goods are returned by a clearly posted deadline or exchange policy, unless clearly marked as non-refundable or non-returnable at the time of purchase. (Public Act 05-38)

MILITARY RELIEF

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF The state has granted municipalities the ability to waive any interest on property tax bills if the resident or spouse has been called to active duty in either the war in Afghanistan or Iraq. If your town decides to enact this provision, and you or your spouse are on active duty when the final tax bill is due, you have a year to make the payment without incurring any penalty. This is just a method for the state to accommodate and show appreciation for our servicemen and women.



FAMILY RELIEF FUND Making ends meet for our military families can be difficult while a spouse is serving on active duty. To help alleviate these difficulties, the Military Department will be setting up a Military Family Relief Fund. This fund will be awarded

to military families, who are having trouble paying for such routine items as clothes, school supplies, baby-sitting, and transportation.

The fund will be created with a state grant and taxpayer income tax check-off contributions. Families will apply for a grant and will be notified within seven days of their eligibility. The Military Department is also responsible for reporting back to the General Assembly every year on the number of applications received, number awarded, amount awarded, and any additional recommendations.